

Hawaii MARINE ON POINT

HAWAII MARINE D SECTION

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Marines take on NFL Military Challenge



Cpl. Gerald Provence kicks a football during the punting portion of the 2006 NFL Military Challenge at Kapiolani Park. This was the first time in three years the Marines did not win the challenge.



Top: Sgt. Raymond Bell attempts to long snap a football through a hole in order to gain points for the Marine Corps team during the 2006 NFL Military Challenge. The Marine team won the competition the past two years but ended up in a tie for second place this year alongside the Army.

Left: Cpl. Gerald Provence (left) congratulates Staff Sgt. Shama Hernandez, after the throwing portion of the 2006 NFL Military Challenge. The Marines dominated the event which showcased Hernandez' quarterback skills. Although the Marine Team placed in the top three spots in almost every event, they ended the day in a tie for second with the Army team.

**Story and Photos by
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Thirty service members from the four services and the Coast Guard went head to head, showcasing their football skills Feb. 10 at Kapiolani Park during the 2006 NFL Military Challenge.

The Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and Coast Guard put together teams made up of their best football athletes in order to participate in this year's competitive event.

For the past two years, the Marine Corps team came out on top, taking home the winning trophy, medals and T-shirts. Their goal this year was to make it a "threepeat" and continue the tradition of winning the challenge.

"We really wanted to come out and win again this year," said Sgt. Raymond Bell. "This was the last year for three of us to participate."

After the first event, the 40-meter dash relay, spirits were down for the six Marines who came in second behind the Air Force team by one-tenth of a second.

The second event provided them with a little more breathing room as Sgt. Gerald Golstien managed to kick eight of 10 field goals. Although the Marines' score wasn't the best out of all the servic-

es - with the Army hitting 10 for 10 and the Coast Guard hitting nine out of 10 - it did bring the Marines' scores up enough to put them in a tie with the Army for first place overall.

The third event brought Bell into the spotlight for the snapping and long-snapping portion of the competition. He ended up getting one ball through the target, which was the third best effort behind the Navy and Air Force.

Cpl. Gerald Provence was the next competitor for the Marines in the punt portion of the challenge. Although he was punting against the wind, he managed to gain three points for his team. Provence said that he thought his performance was less than outstanding.

The final test of skills, a pass and catch challenge, combined the efforts of every team member. Each team was given one minute to gain as many points as possible. There were four target areas, each worth a different number of points. The most points were awarded to the member who caught the ball from the furthest distance.

"The Marines are making this event look easy," said the commentator, midway through the event.

The Marines' dominated the throwing event, scoring eight more points than the team with the second highest scores - the Air Force. Staff Sgt. Shama Hernandez,

quarterback, threw every pass flawlessly, scoring in the high-point range. That win put the Marine Corps team in a tie for first place alongside the Air Force. But due to a scoring error, the Army was awarded the tied first-place position.

Although members of the Marine Corps' team and representatives made efforts, the error was not recognized by the officials until the tie-breaking event had already been played and the Air Force was awarded the win.

Attitudes were somewhat bitter at first, but the Marines said they thought as though they could have come out on top, under different circumstances, but they were comfortable with their own performance.

"All in all, it was a good experience," explained Hernandez. "We are confident that had we been given the opportunity to go into the playoff competition, we would have dominated."

Once all was said and done, the teams all rallied together to receive their awards, take pictures, shake hands with each other, and celebrate another year of football coming to a close.

"It actually may have been good that we didn't win this year," said Hernandez. "It gave another team the chance to have 15 minutes of glory. We will be back next year, fully prepared to take the trophy back."



Members of the Army team shake hands with members of the Marine Corps team during the 2006 NFL Military Challenge. The Army and Marine Corps teams ended the challenge in a second place tie Feb. 10, at Kapiolani Park.